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An Exhibition of French Lithographs from 1875

The Arts Council of Great Britain

1946-7

AN EXHIBITION
OF
FRENCH
LITHOGRAPHS

MAINLY FROM THE COLLECTION OF
CAMPBELL DODGSON, C.B.E.

THE ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN

1946-7

INTRODUCTION

LITHOGRAPHY means to many people a badly foxed print of some elaborate specimen of continental architecture, a portrait of a Victorian worthy or a book-illustration in smooth, oily colours.

In fact, the lithograph is of all kinds of graphic art the most varied in its effects and the one most capable of reproducing an artist's drawing in all its immediacy and vividness. It can be full of detail and of fine lines or it can be bold and sketchy. It can give the effect of pen, pencil, chalk or brush. It can be plain or coloured and it can be printed on almost any kind of paper in small or great numbers.

The whole basis of the art remains impressive in its simplicity. This is merely the mutual antipathy of grease and water, the realization of which was the basis of Senefelder's almost accidental discovery in 1797. In its beginnings lithography was largely used for music printing and as a method of reproducing the topographical drawings of amateurs; and while there have not been any dramatic developments, it is today an art capable of great virtuosity. And it is largely thanks to the work of the French artists shown in this exhibition that it is today recognized not as merely a form of commercial reproduction but a process worthy of the attention of serious and original artists.

In brief, the design is drawn on a block of porous stone (hence the name *lithography*) with a greasy chalk or a pen loaded with greasy ink. Then the stone is flooded with a solution of gum and weak acid which fixes the design and leaves it in very slight relief. Next the surface is damped with water which is only absorbed where there is no drawing. Finally the stone is rolled with printer's ink which is attracted by and adheres to the fatty chalk or ink in which the design has been made and is repelled by the moisture elsewhere. Impressions are then taken on paper which is passed beneath a scraper to give the necessary pressure. As such a process requires that the artist should draw in reverse, a special kind of paper was soon made from which the design drawn in the ordinary way could be transferred, thus producing a reverse image on the stone. Another development is the substitution of artificially grained zinc plates for lithographic stones. These can easily be handled in the artist's studio and being thin and light can then be wrapped round the cylinders of the modern rotary press instead of being printed on the older flat-bed machine.

So much for the technical aspect which those who require more precise information can pursue in the textbooks. It is lithography as an art, and an

art which has attracted many of the most original draughtsmen and sensitive colourists, which we can study here in some detail.

In its beginnings lithography was essentially just one more reproductive process, but it was at once seen to have great technical advantages over copper-plate engraving which was then the usual black-and-white method both for original prints and for book-illustration. And in passing it must be said that the history of prints and book-illustration is inextricably interwoven, for many of the best prints were made as illustrations and the best illustrations are prints in the widest sense of the word. This was established beyond dispute in the recent exhibition of *French Book Illustration* where many of the artists who appear here as print-makers were represented there as book-illustrators. This is true of Toulouse-Lautrec, Bonnard, Rouault, Maillol, Matisse, Derain and Picasso, as well as many others.

Often—one might say usually—the actual printing of the lithograph was left to a master-printer who, although not responsible for the design, deserves a large measure of praise for his guidance in the matter of inks, texture and other technical refinements. Thus it would probably be surprising to discover how many of the prints in this collection had been produced in the atelier of Auguste Clot, who, just as Thomas Way in this country inspired Whistler to try his hand at lithography or Thomas Griffits today initiates artists of the present generation, guided the young painters then attracted by the opportunity to produce in numbers what were virtually original coloured drawings. Nor was Clot, so it is said, averse sometimes to improving on the design submitted to him.

These artists, and indeed almost every other represented in the exhibition, were essentially painters and draughtsmen who did not use lithography as an end in itself. They were not professional lithographers who had had to master a laborious technique in order that they might earn a living by becoming hack copyists whose art, like that of the professional wood-engravers became, however skilful, something dead, monotonous and colourless. Unlike the workers on metal, too, the etchers and line-engravers, they worked on a positive drawing which unfolded itself before their eyes and not on a far less clearly visible negative which comes out in reverse, and then only after the plate has been inked and a series of pulls have been taken, implying a varying degree of trial and error. They were rather *peintres-graveurs*, to use a word coined by the French, which neatly sums up this attitude. And so the history of lithography in France as distinct from other countries is remarkable for the fact that at no time did it become submerged in commercial vulgarity. Almost every French painter of any standing from Delacroix to Picasso has been a lithographer. Some like Sisley, Signac, Gauguin and Cézanne, have

only a few desultory examples to their credit; others like Daumier, Gavarni and Redon worked with an impressive prodigality.

In the middle of the nineteenth century all the graphic arts, including lithography, were at a low ebb everywhere; but France at least had the incomparable Daumier whose four thousand odd contributions to *Charivari* and *Caricature* reveal with ruthless brilliance the soul of France. The lithographs of Daumier and Gavarni are the subject of another Arts Council exhibition.

It was early in the 'sixties that there came a revival of interest, but not yet in lithography. In Britain there was a much over-praised flowering of wood-engraving and in France a rebirth of etching which was chiefly due to the initiative of a publisher named Cadart who was the founder of the *Société des Aquafortistes*, a body with an impressive membership—Manet, Daumier, Jongkind, Legros, Fantin-Latour, Seymour Haden, Whistler, Ribot, Degas, Pissarro, Puvis de Chavannes, Courbet and Boudin. What he had done for etching Cadart now tried to do for lithography but without much success. He pursued Manet with lithographic stones as Vollard was to pursue Renoir forty years later, and he obtained a few examples from a number of other artists which were disappointing enough to make him give up his idea of issuing a publication. Manet did indeed produce a small number of lithographs but the real foundation of the new movement in lithography was laid a few years later, about 1875, by Degas. Few as are the stones on which he drew they showed the way to Toulouse-Lautrec whose portraits of singers and actresses in the theatres and cafés of Montmartre constitute not a diversion or a side-line but an *œuvre*. In these he isolates with a cynical assurance the characteristic features, building his superb designs round a few masterly lines which are the product of his extraordinary visual memory. With a mixture of aristocratic hauteur and fierce sensuality he finds poetry in the ravages of poverty, vice and old age. 'Why have you made me so hideously ugly?' cried Yvette Guilbert on seeing herself drawn by him with the white satin dress and long black gloves—the very gloves which, shown in the Goncourt exhibition in Paris this summer, symbolized with startling force that hectic corner of Parisian life which attracted so many artists with such fruitful results.

Two other illustrators of Montmartre, Forain and Steinlen, were at this time applying their great gifts of draughtsmanship to making lithographs of the contemporary scene. Forain, one of the greatest newspaper illustrators, found inspiration in the little daily tragedies played out in the drab surroundings of the law courts (no. 19); and he did a charming series of plates which are a witty commentary on the private life of the bourgeoisie (no. 17). Steinlen was another newspaper artist who was fascinated by the life of

ordinary people, although he never drew with the sardonic cruelty of Lautrec. He loved them all too much—the midinettes, the old roués, the flower-women and the errand-boys. He made notable designs for the paper *Gil-Blas* and did a number of striking book-covers (no. 56).

It will be noticed that a new and striking use of colour was being made by the lithographers of the 'nineties, especially by the group of *intimistes*—Denis, Bonnard, Vuillard and Roussel—who found the medium particularly sympathetic to their decorative art in which colour plays so essential a part. The opaque oil colours of commercial chromolithography were laid aside for translucent tints in a chalk manner which seem to have been spun like gossamer or to have gently floated on to the paper. This decorative use of flat colours, reminiscent sometimes of the quality of tapestry, sometimes of the naïvety of peasant art, undoubtedly owed much to the prevalent interest in Japanese prints and the colour-posters of Chéret and Steinlen, and it attracted not only artists but publishers like Vollard who now began his career as an *entrepreneur* of the arts with two albums of lithographs which he laid before an uninterested and even antipathetic public at a hundred francs a volume (nos. 9 and 53). The popular cry was still for wood-engravings. Being a shrewd business man Vollard gave them their wood-engravings but he quietly went his way with a number of commissions for lithographs. He was not slow to seize on the vibrant and poetic quality of Bonnard's art as something peculiarly susceptible of translation into lithography and he soon published the well-known series *Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris* (nos. 2, 3 and 4). In these, as in the parallel series *Paysages et intérieurs* by Vuillard (nos. 60–62), there is that characteristic Gallic *joie de vivre* which is expressed in an irresistible harmony of decorative colours. Bonnard also illustrated Verlaine's *Parallèlement* and *Daphnis and Chloë* for Vollard. The latter especially will always rank as one of the masterpieces of lithography with its gentle evocation of the spirit of Greece which we find, too, in the classical nudes of the sculptor Maillol (nos. 27–29).

Odilon Redon was another artist who worked for Vollard and who is one of the most original and sensitive of all lithographers. He was of an earlier generation but he too reacted from impressionism and had a *vie intérieure*. In his exquisite little print *Daylight* (no. 42) one senses at once, in spite of its seeming naturalism, a world of mysticism and fantasy which, more evident in his other more dream-like subjects, stamps him as a visionary and highly imaginative artist who was in truth a precursor of the later surrealists. His quality as a draughtsman is evident in his lovely treatment of a tree (no. 43).

By now the development of French art was moving firmly away from the scientific analysis of light towards a more austere and more constructive reality. On the one hand Gauguin was, with his simplifications of design and

colour, laying the foundations of the school of rhythmic decorators known as the *Fauves* in his noble paintings of Tahitian subjects. Of two of these he made lithographic versions (nos. 22 and 23) but as a graphic artist it was in his woodcuts that he achieved the finest results. The other direction in which French art was then moving is represented by the return to a classic design and structural analysis as formulated in the art of Cézanne (nos. 9 and 10) who has so justly been hailed as the master of modern art. It was inevitable and logical that cubism should follow with its emphasis on an intellectual conception of art, and its sombre colours and its predilection for inanimate objects which could be reduced to their essential volumes and planes—cones, cylinders, pyramids and cubes (no. 7). Of the Fauve artists here represented Matisse is by far the most important as a lithographer. In his considerable output as well as in the works of his confederates, Vlaminck, Derain, Dufy, and Rouault, all is violence. They jump over all intellectual and disciplinary traces and force their way to our sensibility with conviction and genuine emotion. It was the very excess of their rage, as well as the growing influence of Cézanne, which led to a return to reason—the highly planned and abstract reason of cubism which in the hands of Braque and Picasso scandalized the public as these two great pillars of the School of Paris have shocked again in recent months.

Picasso moved on, as he has always done, before the new style became in the hands of lesser men an arid exercise, and ranged through a number of diverse styles all touched with that sense of immense power which makes him so great and at times so frightening a figure (nos. 37 and 38).

Cubism, too, had its excesses and its inevitable reaction, and in the work of men like Moreau (no. 35) and Boussingault (no. 6) one sees a striving towards a new expression which is a balance between intelligence and sensibility. Art is again at the cross roads and it is possible that the direction now taken will not point still towards Paris. It is too soon to say. There can, however, be no denial of the historic importance of French art during the past seventy years.

Although this exhibition is confined to the minor art of lithography one has slipped naturally into a discussion of it in terms of the history of painting. That is not surprising for, as has already been said, French lithography is virtually a branch of painting be it black and white or in full colour, and its great merit is that it has never been merely illustrative.

PHILIP JAMES

SHORT LIST OF REFERENCE BOOKS

MELLERIO, A. *La lithographie en couleurs.* 1898.

GUÉRIN, M. *Forain, lithographe.* 1910.

CRAUZAT, E. DE. *L'œuvre gravé et lithographié de Steinlen.* 1913.

GUÉRIN, M. *L'œuvre gravé de Gauguin.* 1927.

MELLERIO, A. *Odilon Redon.* 1913.

DELTEIL, L. *Le peintre graveur français du XIXe siècle illustré.* 31 vols. 1909–26.

GEISER, B. *Picasso, peintre-graveur. Catalogue illustré.* 1933.

MARGUERY, H. *Les lithographies de Vuillard.* 1935.

ROGER-MARX, CLAUDE. *La gravure originale en France de Manet à nos jours.* 1939.

JOHNSON, UNA E. *Ambroise Vollard, éditeur. 1867–1939. An appreciation and catalogue.* 1944.

THE CATALOGUE

The lithographs in this exhibition are taken with very few exceptions from the collection of Mr. Campbell Dodgson to whom the Arts Council is deeply grateful for his loan. Two have kindly been lent by the Victoria and Albert Museum and one by Sir Kenneth Clark. The measurements are given in inches.

PIERRE BONNARD (born 1867)

1. THE STREET CORNER. 1895.

12½ × 15. In colour.

Plate 3 in *Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris* published by Vollard.

2. THE COURTYARD. 1895.

14 × 10½. In colour.

Plate 4 in *Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris* published by Vollard.

3. THE STREET HAWKER. 895. (Plate 2.)

11½ × 13½. In colour.

Plate 8 in *Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris* published by Vollard.

JOHNSON, 14.

4. THE BOATERS. 1897.

12 × 18¾. In colour.

From the first *Album des Peintres-Graveurs* published by Vollard.

JOHNSON, 18.

5. THE BOULEVARD.

10¾ × 13½. In colour.

JEAN LOUIS BOUSSINGAULT (1883–1943)

6. ILLUMINATIONS AT THE PARIS EXHIBITION, 1937.

12 × 15¾.

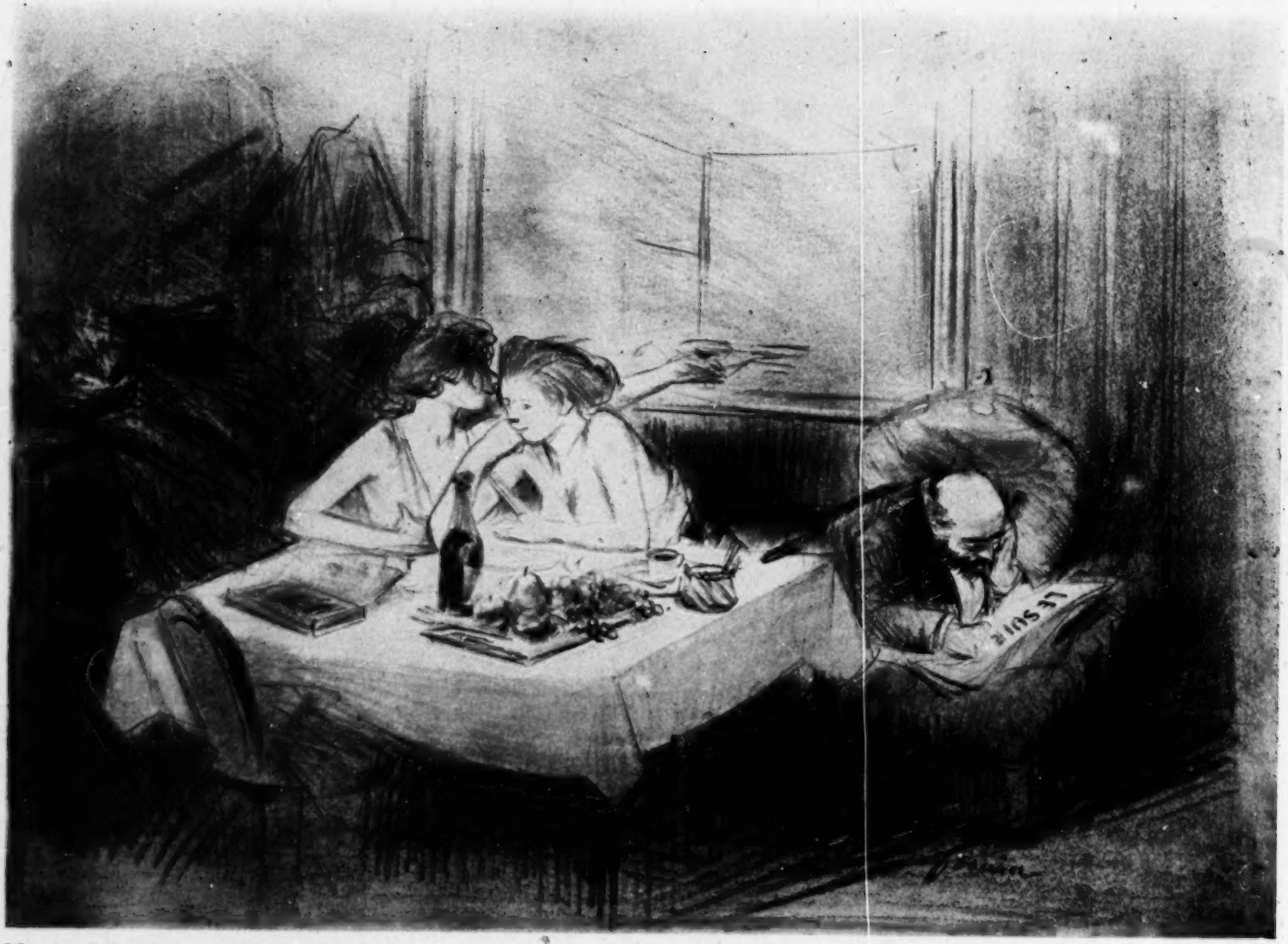
GEORGES BRAQUE (born 1881)

7. STILL LIFE WITH FRUIT.

8¼ × 15¾. In colour.

No. 57. H. de Toulouse-Lautrec: Mlle. Lender and the Baron.

No. 3. P. Bonnard: The street hawker. *In colour.*



No. 17. J. L. Forain: The private room.

No. 30. H. Matisse: Nude. A young girl.

EUGÈNE CARRIÈRE (1849–1906)

8. CLOSED EYES. 1895.

17½ × 14½.

A portrait of the artist's daughter Nelly published in *L'Estampe Originale*.

DELTEIL, 18.

PAUL CÉZANNE (1839–1906)

9. THE BATHERS. (Small version) 1897.

9 × 10½. In colour.

From the second *Album des Peintres-Graveurs* issued by Vollard.

10. THE BATHERS. (Large version) 1898.

16½ × 20½. In colour.

Made for the third (unpublished) *Album des Peintres-Graveurs* issued by Vollard.

EDGAR DEGAS (1834–1917)

11. SINGER IN A CAFÉ-CONCERT. About 1875.

10½ × 8.

First of two states. In the second state the foreground is filled with a design of foliage.

DELTEIL, 53.

12. WOMAN STANDING AT HER TOILET. About 1890.

14½ × 9½.

Second of four states.

DELTEIL, 65.

MAURICE DENIS (1870–1943)

13. THE AFTER-GLOW, SOFT LIKE A FADED PAINTING. 1898.

16 × 11½. In colour.

Plate 6 in the portfolio *Amour* published by Vollard.

14. ON THE SILVER-COLOURED SOFA. 1898.

16 × 11½. In colour.

Plate 10 in the portfolio *Amour* published by Vollard.

ANDRÉ DERAIN (born 1880)

15. WOMAN'S HEAD. 1929.

16¼ × 11¾.

RAOUL DUFY (born 1888)

16. THE REGATTA.

14¼ × 18¼. In colour.

JEAN LOUIS FORAIN (1852–1931)

17. THE PRIVATE ROOM. (Plate 3.)

12 × 17. First state.

GUÉRIN, 12.

18. THE ARTIST AS A LITHOGRAPHER.

16¾ × 13.

GUÉRIN, 25.

19. THE INTERVAL IN COURT.

15¾ × 11¾.

20. THE BATH.

15¼ × 11¼.

GUÉRIN, 53.

PAUL GAUGUIN (1848–1903)

21. THE GRASS-HOPPERS AND THE ANTS. 1889.

8 × 10¼.

One of a series of plates printed from zinc instead of stone, containing subjects from Martinique, Brittany and Arles. First issued on yellow paper, they were reprinted later on 'simili-japon'.

GUÉRIN, 10.

22. MANAO TUPAPAU (THE SPIRIT OF THE DEAD IS WATCHING). 1894.

7¼ × 10¾.

The only true lithograph made by Gauguin. It is a version of the picture painted during his first visit to Tahiti in 1892, formerly in the collection of Sir M. Sadleir. A cut-down proof showing the figure only and touched up with watercolour is included in the artist's manuscript, *Noa-Noa*.

GUÉRIN, 50.

23. JA ORANA MARIA (I HAIL YOU, MARY). 1894.
10¼ × 8.
Printed from zinc. Also a version of a painting made during his first visit to Tahiti.
GUÉRIN, 51.

EDOUARD GOERG (born 1893)

24. 'AND WHEN HE HAD TAKEN THE BOOK, THE FOUR BEASTS AND FOUR AND TWENTY ELDERS FELL DOWN BEFORE THE LAMB.' (Revelation, V, 8.)
13¾ × 10.
One of a series of illustrations to the Apocalypse.

LEON LANG (born 1899)

25. PARIS FROM A ROOF NEAR THE TROCADERO. About 1936.
11½ × 15½.

MARIE LAURENCIN (born 1885)

26. SUZANNE. About 1932.
9½ × 8¼. Coloured by hand.

ARISTIDE MAILLOL (1861–1944)

27. RECLINING NUDE WITH DRAPERY.
7½ × 11¼.

28. FEMALE NUDE STANDING.
11½ × 6¾.
Also published in Frapier, *Album de lithographies originales*, troisième fascicule.

29. HALF-LENGTH NUDE WITH DRAPERY.
11 × 7¾.

HENRI MATISSE (born 1869)

30. NUDE. A YOUNG GIRL. (Plate 4.)
19¾ × 12¾.

31. ODALISQUE.
15 × 10.

32. SEATED ODALISQUE WITH A BOWL OF FRUIT. 1925.
20½ × 13½.

33. SEATED FIGURE. 1922.
Lent by the Victoria and Albert Museum.

34. WOMAN WITH A NECKLACE. 1925.
Lent by the Victoria and Albert Museum.

LUC-ALBERT MOREAU (born 1882)

35. THE BOXERS.
11½ × 9.

PABLO PICASSO (born 1881)

36. SEATED WOMAN. 1924.
12 × 8¾.
GEISER, 239.

37. A WOMAN ON THE SHORE. 1924.
9½ × 13½.
GEISER, 237.

CAMILLE PISSARRO (1830–1903)

38. THE MARKET AT PONTOISE. About 1895.
12 × 9.
Third state. On zinc.
DELTEIL, 147.

39. HAYMAKERS AT ERAGNY. About 1896.
8¾ × 6¼.
On zinc.
DELTEIL, 163.

40. THE GOOSE-GIRL. About 1898.
5½ × 7.
DELTEIL, 187.

ODILON REDON (1840–1916)

41. CLOSED EYES. 1890.
12¼ × 9½.
MELLERIO, 107.

42. DAYLIGHT. 1891.

8¼ × 6.

One of the series of six lithographs in the series *Songes* made in memory of the botanist Armand Clavaud.

MELLERIO, 115.

43. A TREE. 1892.

18⅞ × 12½.

MELLERIO, 120

44. WINGED HORSE. 1893.

12⅞ × 9⅞.

MELLERIO, 122.

45. A WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN. 1899.

11¼ × 9.

From the series of twelve lithographs published by Vollard with the title *L'Apocalypse de Saint-Jean.*

MELLERIO, 179; JOHNSON, 137.

AUGUSTE RENOIR (1841–1919)

46. CHILDREN PLAYING BALL. 1900.

23½ × 20. In colour.

DELTEIL, 32; JOHNSON, 146.

Lent by Sir Kenneth Clark, K.C.B.

47. PORTRAIT OF CÉZANNE. 1902.

17½ × 11½.

DELTEIL, 34.

GEORGES ROUAULT (born 1871)

48. SELF-PORTRAIT WITH CAP. 1926.

9¼ × 6¾.

49. WOMAN DANCER.

12½ × 8¾.

KER-XAVIER ROUSSEL (1867–1944)

50. LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES.

10 × 16½. In colour.

From *L'Album de Paysage* (1899) commissioned by Vollard but uncompleted.

51. LANDSCAPE WITH BATHERS.
10 × 16¼. In colour.
From *L'Album de Paysage* (1899) commissioned by Vollard but uncompleted.

PAUL SIGNAC (1863–1935)

52. IN HOLLAND.
12¼ × 16¼. In colour.

ALFRED SISLEY (1840–1899)

53. THE GEESE. 1897.
8¾ × 12¼. In colour.
One of the two lithographs made by Sisley.
From *L'Album des Peintres-Graveurs.*
DELTEIL, 6; JOHNSON, 190.

THEOPHILE-ALEXANDRE STEINLEN (1859–1925)

54. ASSASSINS TEN A PENNY. 1897.
15 × 11¼.
DE CRAUZAT, 201.

55. PARIS BY NIGHT. 1903.
7⅞ × 12.
First state. In the second state it was used as the cover for *Les Soliloques du Pauvre* by J. Rictus.
DE CRAUZAT, 251.

HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC (1864–1901)

56. THE BOX AT THE MASCARON DORÉ. 1893.
14½ × 11. In colour.
First state. In its second state it was used as a bill for the play *Le Missionnaire* and lettering was added. The man seated in the box is the painter Charles Conder.
DELTEIL, 16.

57. MLLE. LENDER AND THE BARON. 1893. (Plate 1.)
12½ × 10.
One of the twelve lithographs which appeared in the short-lived journal *L'Escarmouche.*
DELTEIL, 43.

58. MAY BELFORT. 1895.

21⅛ × 16¼.

First state. In a second state the two characters in the foreground and the piano were effaced.

DELTEIL, 119.

59. THE SEATED CLOWN. 1896.

20⅛ × 16. In colour.

From the series *Elles*.

DELTEIL, 180.

60. COVER FOR 'LES COURTES JOIES'. 1897.

6 × 9⅛.

First state representing the unlettered covers of a book; front (The fish-wife), back (Don Quixote). In the second state it was overprinted in red with the title.

DELTEIL, 216.

EDOUARD VUILLARD (1868–1940)

61. THE HEARTH. 1899.

14 × 11. In colour.

The eighth of the series *Paysages et intérieurs* issued by Vollard.

MARGUERY, 41; JOHNSON, 200.

62. THE COOK. 1899.

14 × 11. In colour.

The eleventh of the series *Paysages et intérieurs* issued by Vollard.

MARGUERY, 44.

63. THE YOUNG MOTHER. About 1898.

16⅛ × 19. In colour.

For Vollard's third but unpublished *Album des Peintres-Graveurs*.

MARGUERY, 49.

MAURICE DE VLAMINCK (born 1876)

64. LANDSCAPE WITH HOUSE.

9⅛ × 13¼.